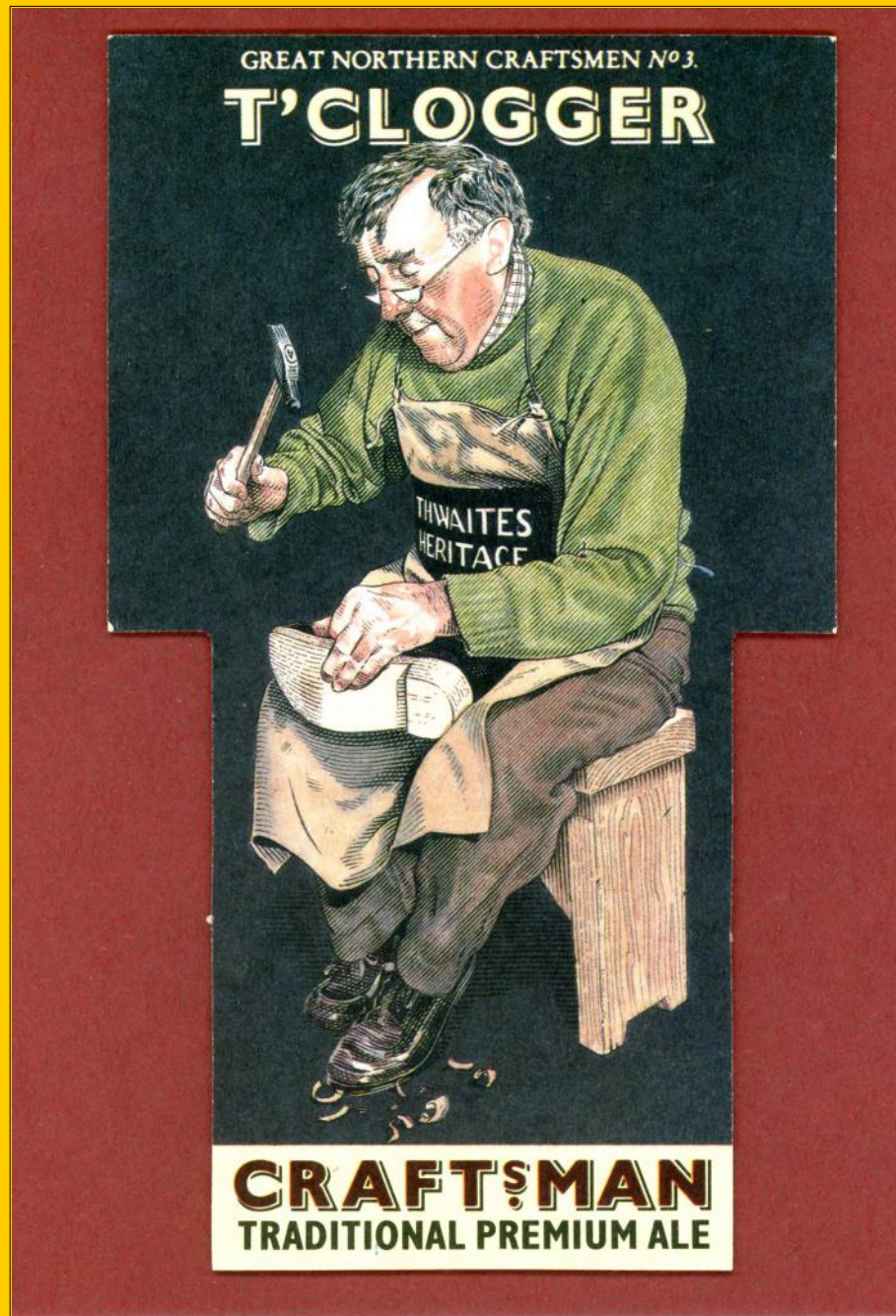


Memories of the Turtons of Skelmersdale, Lancashire



Celebrated Clog Makers

Compiled by Michael L. Jackson,
Adlington, Lancashire (September 2021)

Introduction

This is by no means intended to be a complete history of the Turtons of Skelmersdale, who were probably Lancashire's best-known clog makers in the late twentieth century. It is more in the nature of a scrapbook of random memories. I hope it gives people the opportunity to remember the wonderful work done by Bill, Yvonne and Sandra.

I have included a number of newspaper articles, mainly from the *Liverpool Echo*. I had online access to these, but may add more in time as they become available. I cannot vouch for the accuracy of the articles. I have tried to reproduce them as published, and I have flagged up a few obvious mistakes, some of which are amusing, in particular "clogdancing troops". I have opted to present transcriptions of the newspaper articles rather than original images because they are easy to read and the file size of the document should be smaller. I hope that I have not introduced any errors of my own.

Turton Family History

Some of the newspaper reports refer to Bill Turton's grandfather having been a clogger. This prompted me to look at Bill's family tree, because the reports were not clear as to whether his paternal or maternal grandfather had been the first clog maker in the family.

Bill Turton (1931 – 1998) was the son of Thomas Turton (1907 – 1962) and Mary Webster (1909 – 1999). Thomas and Mary married in 1931.

Mary Webster was the daughter of Henry Webster (1867 – 1929) and Annie Blackburn. Henry Webster, Bill's maternal grandfather, had no obvious connection to clog making. In 1891 he was a Farmer's Son in Rainford, Lancashire. By 1901 he was a Labourer in Coal Mine, living with his in-laws at Vicarage Farm, Skelmersdale. Henry Webster was a Coal Mine Labourer in 1911, living at 5 Kiln Lane, Skelmersdale. It is possible that Henry made clogs as well as working at a coal mine, though this seems not to be documented.

Annie Blackburn (1874 – 1971), Bill's grandmother, was the daughter of Thomas Blackburn (1850 – 1923) and Elizabeth Davies (or Davis). Thomas Blackburn was a farmer of thirty acres at Skelmersdale in 1881; a Farmer & Carter in 1891; a Farmer in 1901; and a Potato Dealer & Farmer in 1911. No recorded connection to clog making.

In 1939, Thomas Turton was living at 129 High Street, Skelmersdale, and his occupation was Stitcher & drafter – Shoe Company. At the time of his unexpected death in 1962, a newspaper report on the inquest gave his address as 129 High Street, Skelmersdale, and described him as a shoe factory worker. Could Thomas have had clog making in his family background?

Thomas' parents were John Thomas Turton (1874 – 1942) and Martha Ellen Sharman (1881 – 1956). John Thomas was the son of Thomas Turton and Elizabeth Briscoe. By the age of seventeen, in 1891, Bill Turton's paternal grandfather was a Colliery Labourer, and was living at 101 Liverpool Road, Skelmersdale. He was a Colliery coal hewer living at 74 Liverpool Road, Skelmersdale, in 1911; and in 1929 he was a Coal Miner – Retired at 126 Liverpool Road, Skelmersdale. John Thomas' father was also a Coal Miner, so again no obvious connection to clog making. As with Henry Webster, it is possible that John Thomas made clogs for fellow coal miners as a sideline.

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Bill's grandmother Martha Ellen was the daughter of Thomas Sharman (or Sherman) and Mary Gardner (or Gardiner). Thomas Sharman, Bill's great-grandfather, was a Blacksmith at 11 Ormskirk Road, Skelmersdale, in 1881. He was also a Blacksmith in 1891, but at 24 Sandy Lane, Skelmersdale. By 1901 he was living at 73 Liverpool Road, Skelmersdale, and the census of that year recorded his occupation as Colliery Blacksmith. The 1911 census showed that Thomas had moved to 63 Liverpool Road, Skelmersdale, and recorded his occupation as Blacksmith (Colliery).

Mary Gardner's parents were Richard Gardner (1841 – 1922) and Ellen Whalley. Richard's occupation was usually recorded as Master Carter or Carting Contractor, without any obvious connection to clog making.

Bill Turton's male ancestors seem to have been employed as Coal Miners, Blacksmiths, Carters, and Farmers. None seem to have been full-time clog makers, but it is possible that one of them made clogs on a part-time basis. I have not checked the occupations of uncles and great uncles. The 1921 census is not available until 2022, and it is possible, but perhaps unlikely, that someone in the family had changed occupations by that year. This is something to review in due course.

Skelmersdale's Cloggers before Bill Turton

If the Turtons were not making clogs in Skelmersdale as a full-time occupation prior to Bill, who were Skelmersdale's cloggers?

A Lancashire directory of 1895 lists as Cloggers in Skelmersdale John Fyles at 141 Sandy Lane, and Thomas Mason at 99 Sandy Lane.

In 1905, Richard Anderton was a Clogger at 72 Liverpool Road, Skelmersdale. John Fyles was a Clogger at 141 Sandy Lane, and also a Clothier and Boot & Shoe Maker at 50 & 52 Sandy Lane. Thomas Lawrenson was a Clogger at 80 Sandy Lane.

Also in 1905, James Webster was a Boot Maker on Ormskirk Road, and John Webster a Boot & Shoe Dealer at 14 Sandy Lane. Could these men have been related to Bill Turton via his mother, Mary Webster?

The census of 1911 listed the following in Skelmersdale:

John William Mason, Clog Maker & Clogger, 20 Clayton Street
Ellis Mason, Apprentice at Clog Shop, 17 Clayton Street
Henry Harold Appleton, Clog Apprentice, 21 Iddon Road
John Welding, Apprentice Clogger, 20 & 22 Sherratt Street
William Birchall, Clogger, 54 Sandy Lane
Joseph Lawrenson, Clogger, 3 Liverpool Road
William Hunt, Clogger, 2 Barnes Road
Samuel Hunt, Clogger, 2 Barnes Road
Thomas Halliwell, Clogger, 65 Summer Street
James Fyles, Clogger, 56 Sandy Lane
Samuel Dawson, Apprentice Clogger, 29 Iddon Road
Richard Anderton, Clogger, 72 Liverpool Road

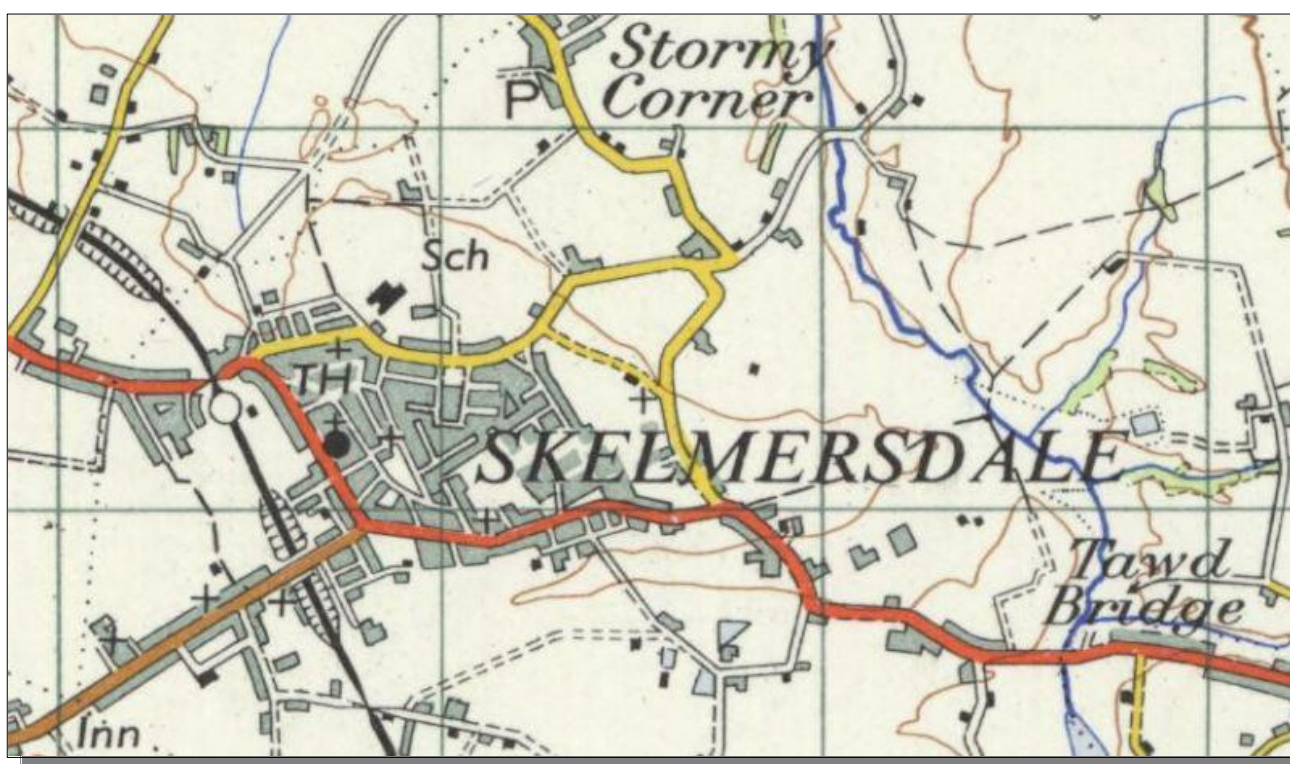
In 1924, Joseph Lawrenson was a Clogger at 139 Sandy Lane, Skelmersdale.

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The register of 1939 recorded John W. Mason as a Clog Maker & Boot Repairer, still at 20 Clayton Street.

The heyday of clog making in Skelmersdale appears to have been before the First World War. The number of people involved in the trade seems to have declined quickly in the 1920s and 1930s. It would have disappeared without a trace had not the Turtons kept the traditional craft alive in Skelmersdale into the early twenty-first century.

There is no clear connection between the Turtons and the earlier professional clog makers in Skelmersdale, but it is possible that Boot Makers James and John Webster were related to Bill's mother, Mary Webster. Though Skelmersdale had several clog makers prior to the First World War, it is still possible that one of Bill's ancestors was an amateur clog maker who made clogs for work colleagues. Keep reading to the end (see "And Finally ...") for my conclusions.



Map pre-New Town Skelmersdale, published in 1961

Acknowledgements

Thanks to Sandra Hindley for the photographs showing the stages of clog production by the Turtons. I would not have prepared this booklet without them. Thanks also to Geoff Hughes for his atmospheric photographs of Bill Turton in his workshop.

Thanks to Duncan Broomhead for the information from his 1983 publication "Clogmakers – A Directory".

Thanks to the British Newspaper Archive, Lancashire Telegraph, and The Free Library for the old newspaper reports and some photographs; and to the National Library of Scotland for the maps.

This document was written using the free software LibreOffice Writer, and the free PDF manipulation tools at <https://jpg2pdf.com/> were very useful.

Newspaper Reports

Boom time for Billy's clever clogs

Clog maker Billy Turton believes his once dying craft could be coming back to life.

For, after 33 years of turning handfuls of clog nails, beechwood soles and leather uppers into hard-wearing footwear, Billy's business is booming.

Demand for the traditional clogs he produces in a small wooden workshop behind his home in High Street, Skelmersdale, has grown in the past few years, with orders ranging from farmers' clogs going to Cumbria to tiny souvenir clogs going abroad.

Said 47-years-old Billy: "I could do with two pairs of hands."

But now Billy, who has a shoe repair business, has plans to boost production and cut supply problems by making his own leather uppers.

Liverpool Echo, 20th July 1978

Wooden you know Bill's clogs all the rage!

Story: PAUL DESMOND Picture: EDDIE BARFORD

CLOGMAKER Bill Turton wasn't surprised phone call the other day.

It concerned a young man studying for a degree in tropical medicine at Edinburgh University.

He wanted to switch courses — and learn the craft of making clogs.

Although Bill was not able to offer him a job, the approach reflected a growing interest in the old Lancashire tradition.

Distinctive

Orders pour in from the over the country for the distinctive footwear which Bill makes in a shed at the bottom of his garden in High Street, Skelmersdale.

And it is not only members of clog and Morris dancing troupes [sic] placing orders.

Bill, who is helped by his wife Yvonne, supplies a range of clogs to farm workers and lorry drivers.

He also has a standing order from students at Lancaster University where clogs are top of the footwear league [sic].

The demand is sufficient to keep the Skelmersdale couple busy at their home-made lasts but not to expand and take on extra help.

Both admit that the hey-day for the clog has long since gone.

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When Bill served his seven-year apprenticeship that particular workshop was turning out up to 300 pairs a week.

Virtually every miner in the area wore a special clasp clog later to be replaced by industrial safety shoes.

For the couple it is a labour of love carrying on a family tradition which was started by Bill's grandfather at the turn of the century.



Liverpool Echo, 22nd December 1981

The Cloggies!

They are alive and working at the bottom of a garden
By Angela Candlin

YVONNE TURTON spends a lot of her working life skiving.

She is one of the of the cloggies.

Clogs are as much all part of northern life as black puddings and cow heel pie—and to some people just as funny.

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But Yvonne and her clog wearing husband Bill are updateing sic] their comic postcard image.

They have a unique small business making clogs for a new generation of clog wearers. To their delight many under-twelves prefer clogs to mass produced fashion shoes and trainers.

The couple's hand made children's clogs are a mini version of the traditional footwear worn by generations of miners down th'pit.

"Our clogs are made using the same waxing and waterproofing methods as in the Middle Ages," said Yvonne. "The only difference is that the base is beech wood, you can't get alder now."

the [sic] Turtons work like magic shoemakers in a Grimm's fairy tale in a ramshackle shed at the bottom of their dahlia filled garden in High Street, Skelmersdale.

Inside the air is thick with the tang of leather fresh from the cow and the oompah oompah of brass band music.

Bill, a drummer with the prestige Skelmersdale Prize Band, plays it full blas from a wind up gramophone in one dusty corner. "We don't talk much, there is no need," said his wife, who prefers to work in companiable silence at an adjoining scarred bench.

Many of the tools they use are more than fifty years old and belonged to Bill's grandfather, also a clogger. They include the crimper for cutting elaborate patterns into the leather and the skiver, to shape round the ankle and tongue.

Joyce [sic], who is possibly the only woman clogger in the country, was taught the skill by her husband. He served a seven year apprenticeship.

But it is only by adapting to a changed world that they have made a business success. Old Skem with its back to back Coronation Street terraces homes is dominated now by the factories of a new town.

So the Turtons are mkaing [sic] factory clogs, ideal for industries because clogs don't slip on greasy surfaces and oil won't effect the wooden base as it would a leather shoe.

"For some reason people think clogs are heavy and uncomfortable" declared Bill. "But they are quite light and the best thing you can put on your feet.

"Quite a few of our customers came on the recommendation of specialists. A little girl was brought by her dad because she wouldn't put her heel down properly when she walked. I made her a pair of real fancy 'uns and it did the trick.

"But more and more men, women and kiddies too wear clogs because they are so comfortable."

Now 52, he is sad that clog making is a dying skill, but pleased to demonstrate it at craft fairs inside tents reeking of trampled grass and nostalgia.

Some of this designs are displayed at museums, and it is a treat for him to get an order for dancing clogs decorated with bells as worn by Morris Men troupes. "When the kip comes—that's the soft

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leather from the cow's underbelly—I really go to town. Sometimes I get that carried away with the scroll work I don't know when to stop."

In the old days babies went out of the pram and into clogs in a tiny 2. Now he sells these miniatures with their brass tacks and posh scroll work as lucky mascots. People who wouldn't be seen dead in clogs adorn their mantelpieces with them instead.

In the 18th century there was a particular Lancashire way of fighting. Contestants used to squeeze each other's throats and kick out with their clogs. The result was often fatal.

Now they are being put to even strange use.

The Turtons were tickled pink to discover why one lady wanted to buy an old miner's clog from them. "It had been here for donkey's years waiting to be collected after a repair. It was still full of coal dust," explained Bill. 'Bless me she put dried flowers in it and stuck it on top of the telly."

Liverpool Echo, 5th July 1984

Skills from the past on show

LIVERPOOL'S Lord Mayor will be clogging it this weekend at the Woolton Show.

Councillor Dot Gavin will be shown the art of clog making by craftsman Bill Turton, one of six people demonstrating the traditional skills of Lancashire and Cumbria.

The craftsmen, all from Thwaites Heritage Centre, visit Woolton Show, Camp Hill, Woolton on bank holiday Monday, August 27.

Other craftsmen demonstrating their skills will be blacksmith Ron Carter; bodger Arthur Barker; stickmaker Charlie May; wheelwright Edward Crowhurst and swill-basket maker Owen Jones.

Cllr Gavin will be invited to try on a pair of clogs and will be presented with a miniature pair.

Liverpool Echo, 25th August 1990

THE WONDERS OF WOOLTON

Show packs 'em in

By Ann Todd

Pictures: Frank Loughlin

THOUSANDS flocked to the annual Woolton Show in Liverpool yesterday making it one of the bumper Bank Holiday events.

The show, now in its 44th year, claims to be the largest one-day event in the country.

There were also demonstrations of skills from the past by craftsmen such as clog maker Bill Turton.

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He was one of six people from Thwaite Heritage Centre demonstrating the traditional skills of Lancashire and Cumbria at the event in Camp Hill.



Liverpool Echo, 28th August 1990 (extract)

Award for Skem clog maker

CLOG MAKER Yvonne Turton, from Skelmersdale, has won a top award for putting the boot in for Merseyside.

She has been presented with a Thwaites Heritage Craft Award by the Blackburn-based brewery for her efforts in promoting clog making in the North West.

Yvonne has been clog making for more than 25 years, taking up the trade after her son began school, and has earned an international reputation as one of the country's best clog makers.

She said: "It's the first award I think a clog maker has ever won. It's nice to receive a vote of support."

Yvonne and her fellow Lancashire craftsmen can be seen at this year's Southport Flower Show, from August 22-24.

Liverpool Echo, 15th August 1991

Crafty Bill's clogs fit for princesses

By John Thompson

CRAFTY footman Bill Turton has just won the Royal Sole of Approval — after making two pairs of clogs for Prince Andrew's daughters.



Sole supplier . . . Bill Turton with the clogs

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The 60-year-old shoemaker's clogs are now destined for the tiny feet of princesses Beatrice and Eugenie after they were delivered to Major Ronald Ferguson — the Duchess of York's dad.

The clogs were built to the same trusty formula devised more than 60 years ago in Lancashire. They come complete with the names of the royals embroidered on the insteps.

Expert craftsman Bill, from Old Skelmersdale, said: "I am absolutely delighted they have been accepted by the Duke and Duchess of York for their children."

Bill, helped by his wife Yvonne, runs the business he has been in for nearly 40 years from a small workshop in back garden of his home.

His shoe, clasp, dandy and pit clogs have travelled the world on the feet of clogdancing troops [sic].

Down the years he has had export orders for Turton clogs from South America, Hong Kong and Australia.

Liverpool Echo, 28th December 1991

'Big Foot' offered size 15 Lancashire superclogs

A CLOG maker has offered to come to the rescue of " Big-Foot" Toafiq Wahab.

The 21-year-old Halifax Building Society worker appealed for help through the Lancashire Evening Telegraph after being quoted £300 for a pair of size-15 shoes.

But today Oswaldtwistle Mills' resident clog maker Bill Turton offered his services.

A spokesman at the Lancashire heritage attraction said: " Bill will make a pair of designer, hand-made clogs to the colour of his choice.

"They are guaranteed to be extremely comfortable and hard wearing and will be given to him with our compliments.

"We are aware that Mr Wahab needs the footwear for work, so we'll eliminate the toe tap and fit a micro sole to reduce the noise level."

Toafiq - known to friends as Toff - of Lancaster Place, Blackburn, was slightly doubtful at the prospect of wearing clogs but has decided to give it a try.

He was being measured up at Oswaldtwistle Mills yesterday.

Offers of assistance have flooded in since he made his appeal.

He said: "I have had the mick taken out of me at work - but I'm really grateful that people have tried so hard to help me."

Lancashire Telegraph, 24th June 1996 (online archive)

Last dance for Skem clogs as family firm shuts down.

A FAMILY firm of clog makers is shutting up shop after half a century.

The Turton family has been supplying traditional footwear from a converted hen shed in High Street, Skelmersdale, for the past 50 years.

Their products have been worn the length and breadth of the country and have also been sent to America.

The Turtons plan to stop trading in March, ending a tradition which has been passed down through generations.

Billy Turton set up the business after serving his apprenticeship at the former Skelmersdale Shoe Co at the top of High Street.

When he died a few years ago his daughter Sandra took over the workshop. It still stands at the back of her mother Yvonne's house adorned with Billy's original tools and an authentic stove fire.

Sandra said: ``Dad taught me the proper way and it probably took five years. I still put in an eight-hour day for two or three days a week.

``There isn't much demand these days, but we still get a lot of orders, especially from dancing groups."

Yvonne, 67, added: ``Billy trained in shoe repairs and clog making, so when he started his own business he had to choose.

``Skelmersdale was a lot different then.

``Sandy Lane had milk bars and lots of chip shops.

``When we were courting, me and Billy used to get back from Wigan on the Skem Jazzer which came from Rainford railway station to Skelmersdale."

Liverpool Echo, 23rd January 2004 (from The Free Library)

Scrapbook

21. W. TURTON
129 HIGH STREET
SKELMERSDALE
LANCASHIRE
TELEPHONE 23802

uppers:

handmade in own factory

style: Gibson, Morris, Clasp,
dershu, Buckle Bar, clasp Bar.

Colours: Black, brown, Navy,
Cherry red, Pillar box red,
Grass green, Bottle green,
Tan, White.

Soles: factory made

Style: ducks

crimp: illustrated: Will also
do customers own design.

Mail order accepted.
Delivery 2 weeks

other information:
catalogue available soon.
Supplies a number of other
clog makers with uppers.
Lectures and demos given.
All stitching is in red.

Childrens Morris and wax derby
now available.

Now manufacturing a brass
clasp for purchase.



WAGSTAFFE, J.
29 Station Rd.,
Holmfirth, W. Yorks
Tel. Holmfirth 3233

industrial clogs only

WALKLEY, Roy "The Clogmaker"
P.O. Box No.9
Ripon, North Yorks
Tel: 0484-42253

Uppers: handmade or factory made

Styles: Gibson, Bar

Colours: Black, Red.

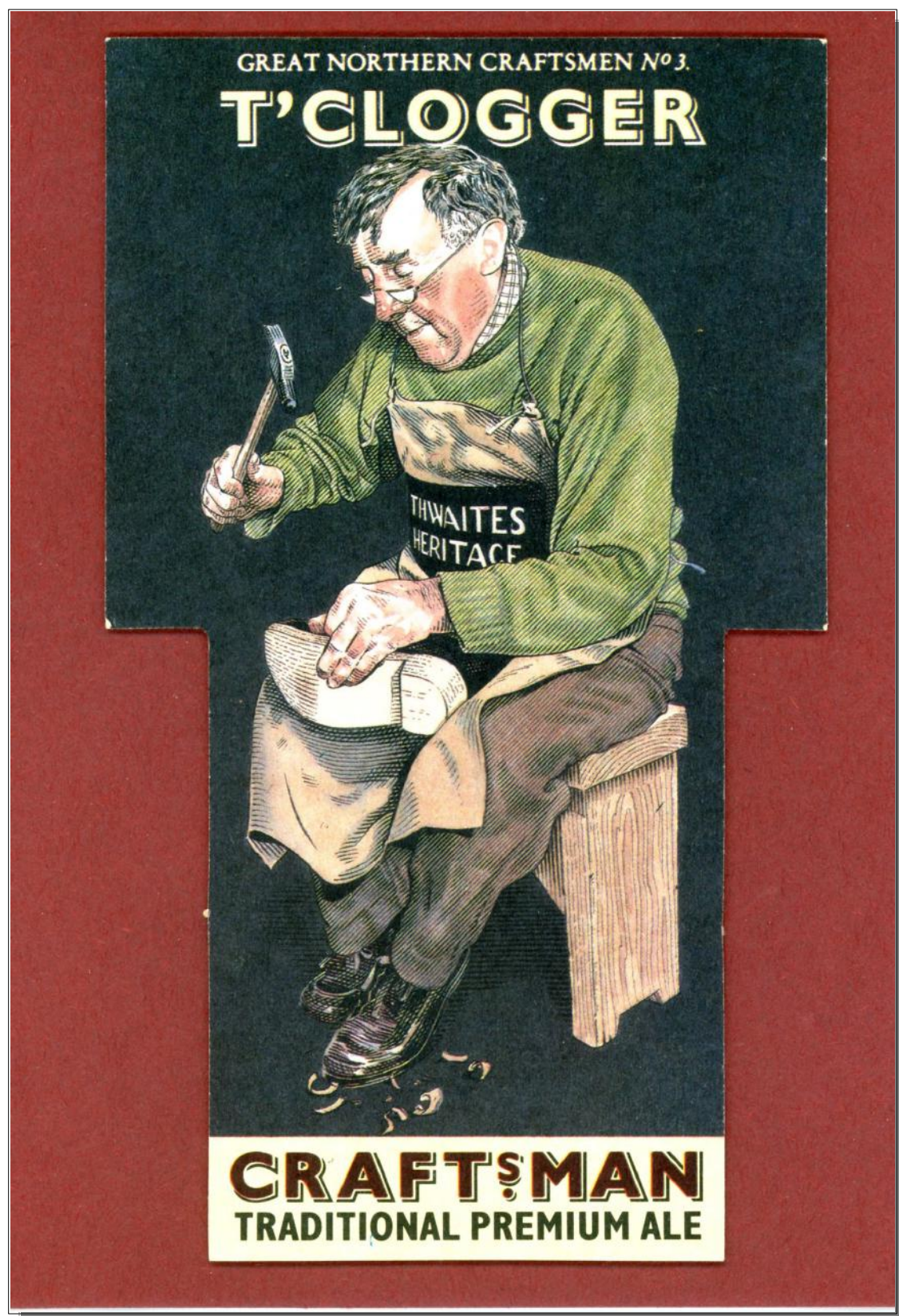
Soles: Handcut, re-cuts, factory

Styles: Ducks, commons

crimp: will crimp
customers own design

mail order accepted,
delivery 2 weeks.

Catalogue available.



Thwaites' Beermat featuring Bill Turton (1990s)

Turton Clogs

Many years ago in the industrial heart of Lancashire, the early morning air would echo to the clatter of iron clad clogs on the hard stone pavements as the miners and mill girls made their way to work.

The clatter is now silenced, times change and the post war years have brought with them the era of mass production, cheap foreign imports and the introduction of man made fibres which heralded the end of Lancashire's cotton industry and many of the crafts which it supported have gone forever.

Happily, though, some of our ancient and traditional crafts are surviving through people like Bill and Yvonne Turton who still carry on making the clogs which rattled the pavements so long ago.

Bill has been a master clogger for almost half a century and still works in the same premises in High Street, Skelmersdale, where he set up his business 37 years ago. He is ably assisted by his wife Yvonne, who has the unique distinction of being the only lady clogger in Britain.

This husband and wife team run a thriving business and with their daughter Sandra have built up a network of 25 Regional clog makers and have recently formed an association with the aims of sharing information and marketing locally.

Clogs have always been associated with hard work, each pair having waxed waterproof uppers and hard wooden soles which are carved from solid blocks of alder which offers unrivalled comfort to the wearer. No matter what the task might be whether it is farming or mining, dancing or decorative there will always be a clog for the job.

Bill and Yvonne also enjoy an international reputation, their clogs have been exported to no fewer than nine foreign countries ranging from New Zealand to Hong Kong. They travel many miles themselves and can regularly be seen at agricultural and craft fairs up and down the country exhibiting and demonstrating their fine art of traditional clog making.

Yvonne or Bill would be happy to discuss your requirements -- give them a ring on 0695--31678. you may be surprised at what is available.

HOW TO ORDER

STAND UPRIGHT AND BAREFOOT
ON A SMOOTH FLAT SURFACE.
ASK A FRIEND TO DRAW A SINGLE
TIGHT LINE AROUND EACH FOOT
ON TO A PIECE OF PAPER, HOLDING
THE PENCIL POINT DOWN AND
UPRIGHT, ESPECIALLY AROUND
THE HEEL.

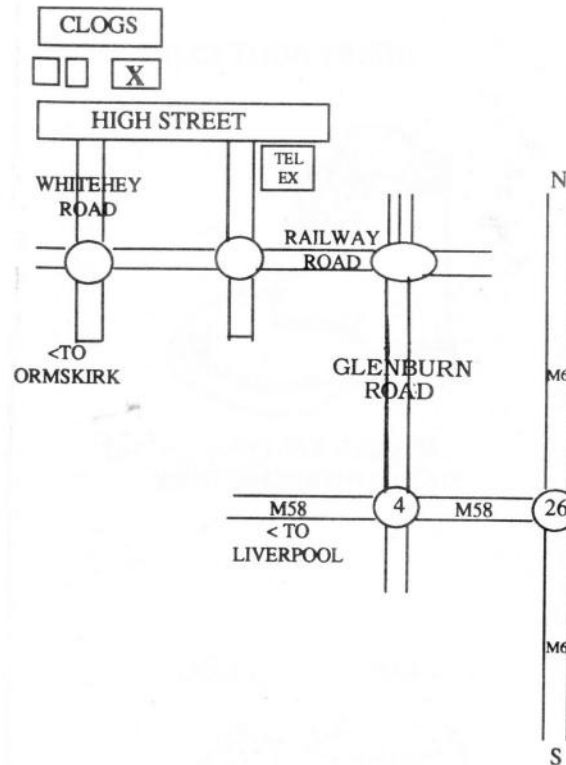
PLEASE INCLUDE YOUR REGULAR
SHOE SIZE

PLEASE SEND INFORMATION ALONG
WITH CHEQUE OR POSTAL ORDER

TO:-

TURTON CLOGS

129, HIGH STREET
SKELMERSDALE
LANCASHIRE
WN8 8AT.
TELEPHONE -0695-31678



TURTON CLOGS



COLOURS

BLACK
RED
BLUE
BROWN
LIGHT GREEN

OTHER COLOURS AVAILABLE

PRICE LIST

	<u>MENS</u>	<u>LADIES</u>
DERBY BOOT	£50.00 £55	£50.00
STEEL TOE	£50.00	£45.00
LOW LACE	£40.00	£35.00
LONG TONGUE	£40.00 £40	£35.00
ONE BAR	£40.00 £40	£35.00
CHILDREN'S	Sizes 4-5-6-7	£15.00
	Sizes 8-9	£20.00
	Sizes 10-11-13-1	£22.00

PLEASE ADD £4.00 POSTAGE & PACKING

WE ALSO DO DECORATIVE WORK

PLEASE ASK FOR DETAILS

DERBY BOOT CLOG



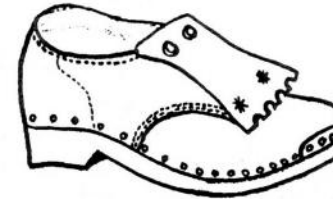
WAXED SPLITS
WAXED IN OUR FACTORY

LOW LACE CLOG



STANDARD LACE-UP STYLE WITH
RUBBER SOLE/HEEL

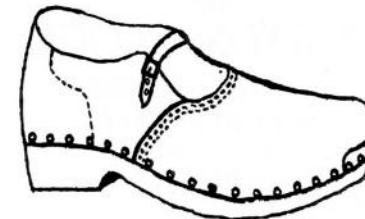
LONG TONGUE CLOG



OUTER STEEL TOE CAP



ONE BAR CLOG



Turtons' Clog Making Display Boards

Sandra Hindley generously donated these display boards showing how clogs were made by the Turtons. She even drove over to Adlington to drop them off at my house!

We have removed the photographs from the boards because there are limited opportunities for taking them to talks about clog making at present. Instead they have been attached to acid-free card for storing in acid-free wallets, in order to preserve them for as long as possible.

All of the photographs have been scanned so that they can be enjoyed by as many people as possible. Each scanned photograph appears after its caption in the following pages.



Alder wood logs waiting to be cut.



Splitting the alder wood logs to make clog blocks which are then put out to dry.



The cloggers stock knife used to make clog soles.



The clog sole being 'ironed' with the use of a steady.



The leather is cut for the uppers on the Clicking Bench.



Cutting a pattern into the leather with a 'Crimper'.



Sewing up the back of the clog with a hand-made wax thread.



Lasting the upper. Whilst on the last the upper is rubbed with a burnishing iron.



Fixing the leather upper to the sole with clog tacks. Brass tacks are traditionally fixed around the toes.



A pair of craftsman-made 'dandy' or 'fancy' clogs for best wear.

**Alder wood logs
waiting to be cut.**



**Splitting the
alder wood
logs to make
clog blocks
which are
then put out
to dry.**



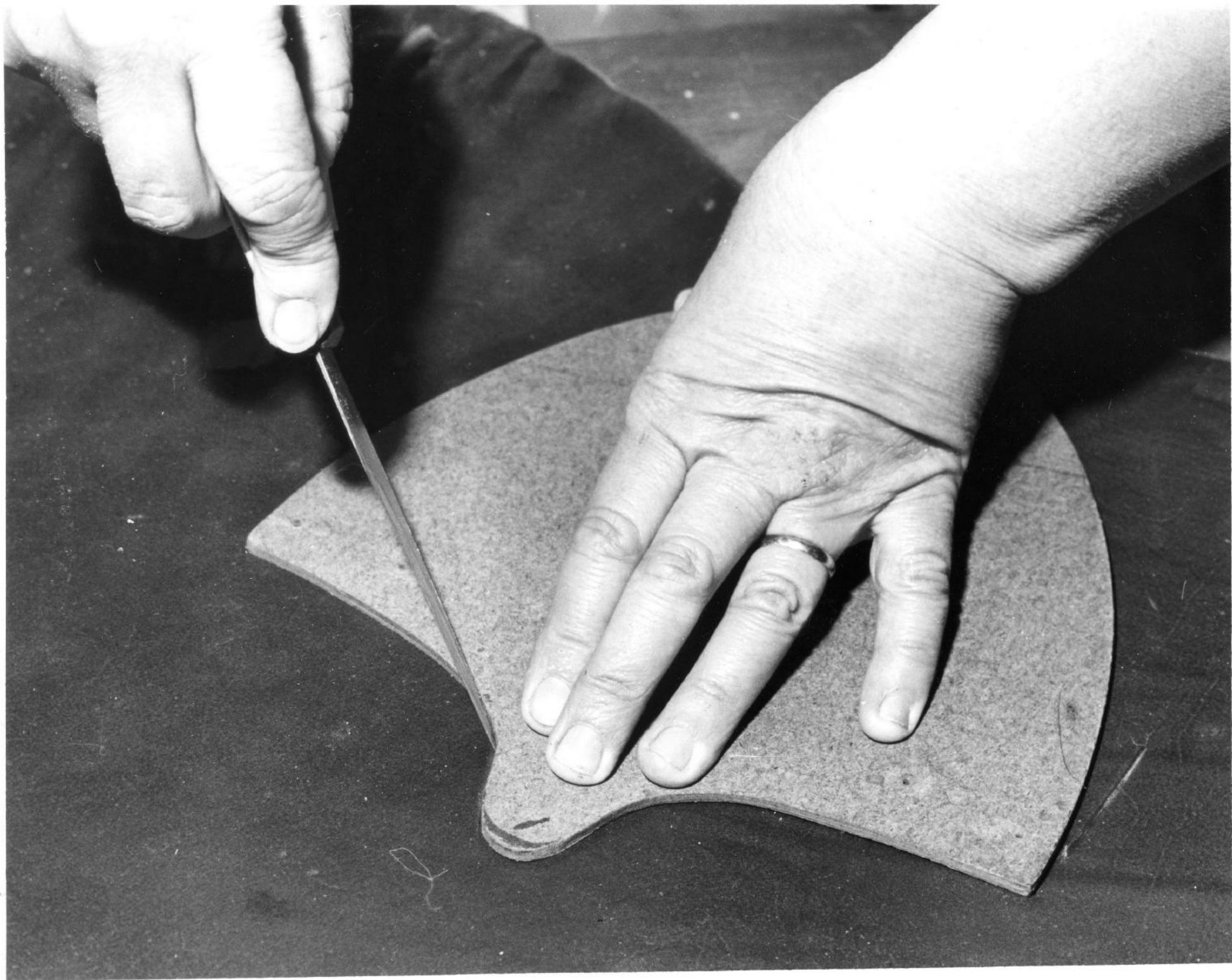
**The
clogger's
stock knife
used to
make clog
soles.**



**The clog
sole being
‘ironed’
with the
use of a
steady.**



**The leather
is cut for
the uppers
on the
Clicking
Bench.**



**Cutting a
pattern
into the
leather
with a
‘Crimper’.**



**Sewing up the
back of the clog
with a hand-made
wax thread.**



**Lasting the upper.
Whilst on the last the
upper is rubbed with
a burnishing iron.**



**Fixing the
leather upper
to the sole with
clog tacks.**

**Brass tacks are
traditionally
fixed round the
toes.**



**A pair of craftsman-
made ‘dandy’ or
‘fancy’ clogs for
‘best’ wear.**



Geoff Hughes' Photographs

I am grateful to well-known clog dancer Geoff Hughes for his permission to include the following photographs in the booklet. Geoff took the photographs of Bill Turton and his workshop on a visit to Skelmersdale in the mid-1990s.

In addition, in 1994, Geoff made an excellent short video of Bill making clogs in his Skelmersdale workshop. You can watch the video on *vimeo* at <https://vimeo.com/595353699>













































Some Turton Clogs



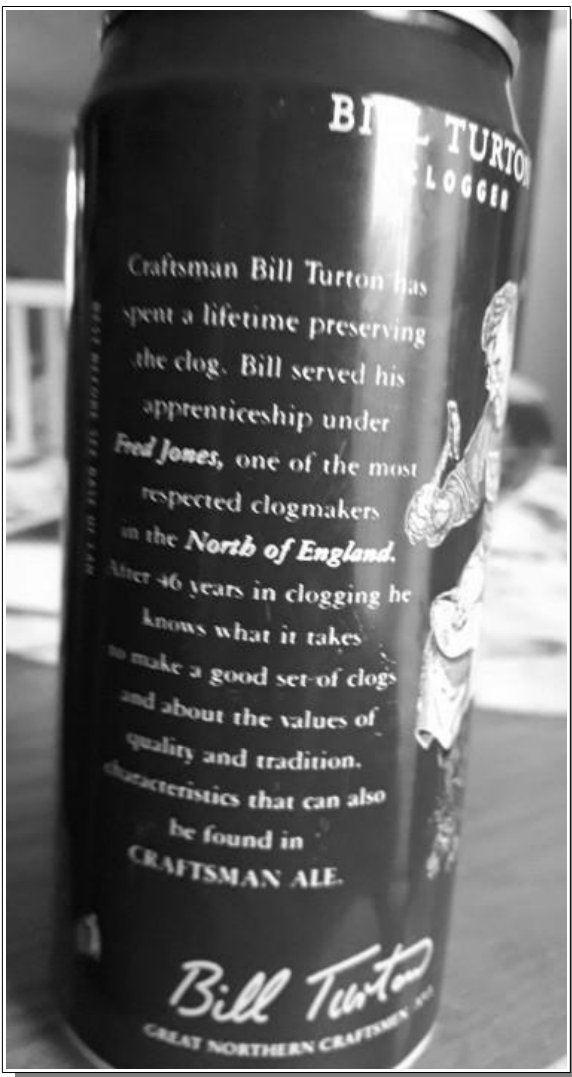


And Finally ...

Almost in the style of a speculative documentary on certain TV channels, in the Introduction I examined the suggestion that Bill Turton's grandfather had been a clog maker, as stated in a couple of newspaper reports. In the spirit of some TV documentaries, I did not reach any firm conclusions. I could not find any records to confirm that one of Bill's grandfathers, or perhaps another relation, had been a clog maker. However, absence of evidence is not necessarily proof that something did not happen. It seemed possible that an ancestor of Bill's had been a part-time clogger, perhaps making clogs for work colleagues, but there would not be documentation to prove this.

I now know from a family member, Sandra Hindley, that Bill was the first clog maker in the Turton family. Neither grandfather was a clogger.

I assume a journalist made the statement in good faith, and then it was repeated in a later article. It just goes to show that you shouldn't believe everything you read in newspapers, even something uncontroversial such as a family's history of clog making! Perhaps the journalist misinterpreted notes made during an interview with Bill?



In fact, the truth about the source of Bill Turton's knowledge of clog making appeared on a Thwaites' beer can, which stated that "Bill served his apprenticeship under Fred Jones".

Frederick James Jones was born in Wigan, Lancashire, in 1890. There seem not to have been any clog makers in his family, but in 1911 he was a Boot Repairer in Wigan. (Jones' grandfather, John Graham, was a shoemaker in Bolton and Wigan, but it seems to be a coincidence that Fred later took up a similar trade.)

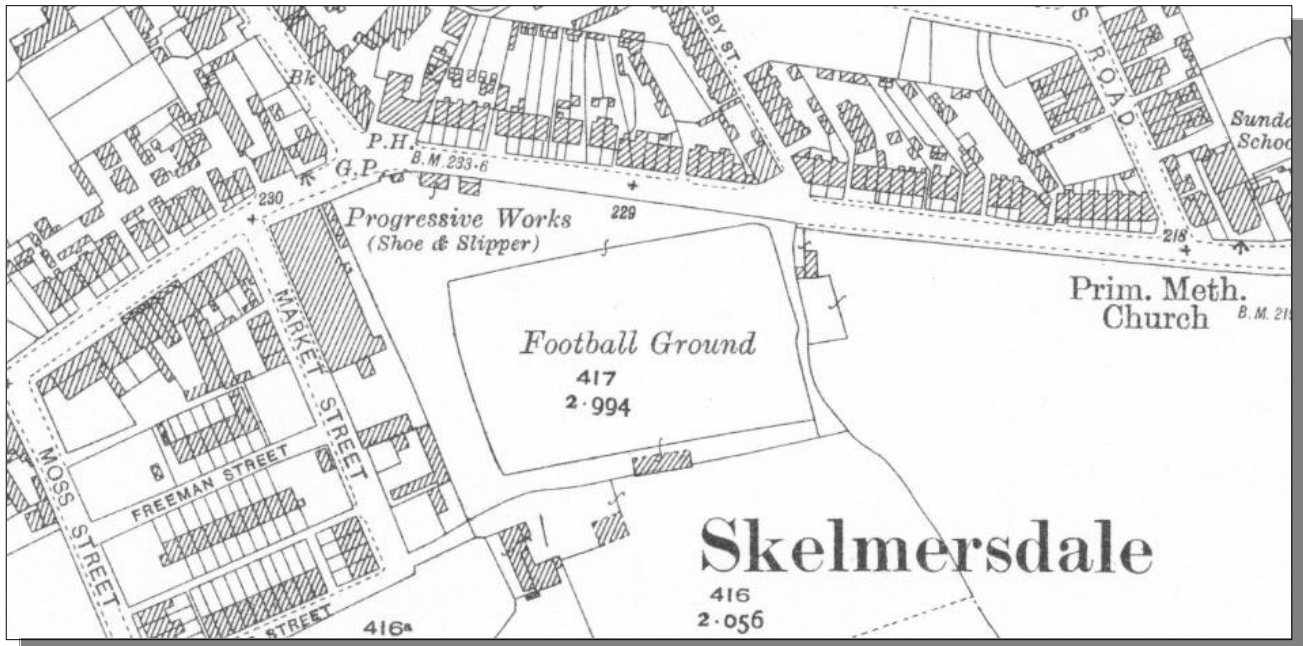
In the late 1920s, Fred moved to Skelmersdale to take up a job as clogger and shoe repairer with the Co-op. He was living at 127 High Street, Skelmersdale, in 1939 (next door to Bill Turton and his parents), and his occupation was Boot Maker and Clogger.

Bill Turton spent hours in Fred's workshop learning clog making. When Fred Jones died, in 1949, his tools were given to Bill. (I am grateful to Fred's granddaughter Pauline Heyes for this information, which is confirmed by Bill's daughter Sandra Hindley.)

To reiterate, you can't believe all you read in newspapers. Bill Turton did not learn clog making from his grandfather, and did not inherit Turton family tools. Sometimes a beer can proves to be a

more accurate source of historical information than a newspaper article.

Thomas Turton and his son Bill both worked for a shoe company in Skelmersdale. I assume this to be the Skelmersdale Shoe Company Limited, at the Progressive Works (former Market Hall), Liverpool Road, Skelmersdale. This was a short walk from 129 High Street.



Map – Skelmersdale 1926, showing the Progressive Works (Shoe & Slipper) on the corner of Liverpool Road and Market Street. High Street is immediately to the north of the Football Ground

The company was established in Skelmersdale in 1919 by William Bolton (1883 – 1940) and his brother-in-law. They were from Lancashire's Rossendale Valley, where there were several shoe and slipper factories. Their company became a big employer in Skelmersdale. Far more people were employed in making shoes and slippers than ever made clogs.

Though the company thrived for several decades, the factory closed in 1966, and 150 people lost their jobs.

150 LOSE JOBS AS FACTORY CLOSES

A Skelmersdale factory which has been in production for nearly 50 years has closed down, and about 150 operatives have lost their jobs.

It is the Skelmersdale Shoe Company's factory at Market Hall in Liverpool Road, which was opened in 1919.

A statement issued on behalf of the company by a Leicester firm of accountants yesterday said: "The directors of the Skelmersdale Shoe Company, Limited, which has been in production for nearly 50 years, have reached the decision that unfortunately it must close.

"Notices have been given to the operatives and steps are to be taken for liquidation. Meetings of shareholders and creditors are to be held in the near future, and every effort will [sic] be made to assist, so far as possible the re-employment of the employees affected."

SUDDEN DECISION

A Ministry of Labour official in Ormskirk said yesterday that there were reasonable hopes of getting jobs for those displaced. The decision to close the factory, however, had come so suddenly that there was bound to be a short period of unemployment for most of them.

Of the 150 workers dismissed, about half are women and girls.

At one period the factory employed as many as 500 workers, with about 250 out-workers.

A member of the staff who has been with the firm for more than 35 years said that whilst some were aware there were difficulties, it was thought they would be able to weather the storm. The sudden decision to close down came as a shock to most of the workers.

Liverpool Echo, 5th October 1966

Bill Turton revived the art of clog making in Skelmersdale. Many people know of Skelmersdale only because that's where their Turton clogs came from.

Another former employee of the shoe company set up his own business making slippers. His son then established a Skelmersdale company which traded as Hotter Shoes, but that's another story! (As it doesn't involve clogs, I'll leave it to someone else.)